



TEST.

AVID Diva II SP

APRIL 18, 2016 // WOLFGANG KEMPER

UK turntables have a good reputation. AVID HiFi Ltd. offers a wide range of interesting models. Here, the AVID Diva II SP draws attention to itself with its distinctive design features. We would like to know how he performs musically at his still down-to-earth price.



The drive control is in this separate unit and offers speed switching and fine adjustment

Forty-three minutes is the fastest train service from London Kings Cross for the approximately 60 miles north to the Cambridgeshire town of Huntingdon. From there it's about twelve miles west to Kimbolton. Henry VIII's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, spent her last years at Kimbolton Castle. This lock is not the registered office of AVID HiFi Ltd. Rather, AVID is a modern, future-oriented company with high demands on manufacturing quality and, above all, on the sound quality of the various products. In addition to drives, they also produce several phono preamps. A diverse range of complex cables for audio connections is just as much a part of the English company's portfolio as sound furniture and various accessories. Our Diva II SP is priced at 4000 euros for the turntable without a tonearm, rather at the lower end of the AVID price scale. Nevertheless, there are still several models, such as the Diva II without SP. However, the technical difference between the two divas is significant, even if they are the same in many respects in the basic construction. The latter allows the owner of a Diva II to upgrade it to the Diva II SP for £1300. This option indicates the constructive closeness of the different AVID models. The latter allows the owner of a Diva II to upgrade it to the Diva II SP for £1300. This option indicates the constructive closeness of the different AVID models. The latter allows the owner of a Diva II to upgrade it to the Diva II SP for £1300. This option indicates the constructive closeness of the different AVID models.

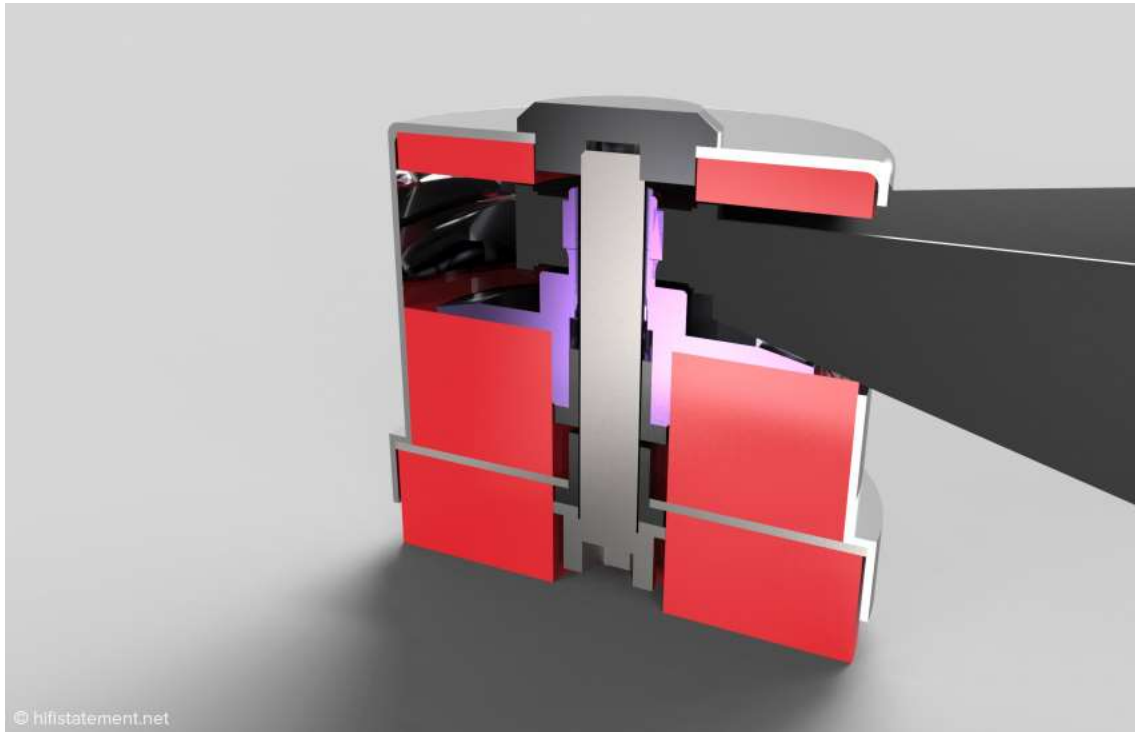


Such a chassis is not only something special for this price range. When unpacking a Diva turntable, you'll be delighted with the professional, sophisticated, secure packaging. This also indicates that AVID HiFi Ltd. is not a small company. It was founded in 1995 and has secured an excellent reputation on the world market over the past two decades. In Huntingdon, they value the best possible processing and are therefore equipped with a correspondingly high-quality machine park. The quality of manufacturing has contributed to the image of the solid company as much as the AVID name itself. AVID stands for: A Very Interesting Design. Company boss Conrad Mas is known beyond the boundaries of the audio industry and respected for the engineering art of his house. The luxury brand Aston Martin also equips its dream cars with parts from Conrad Mas.



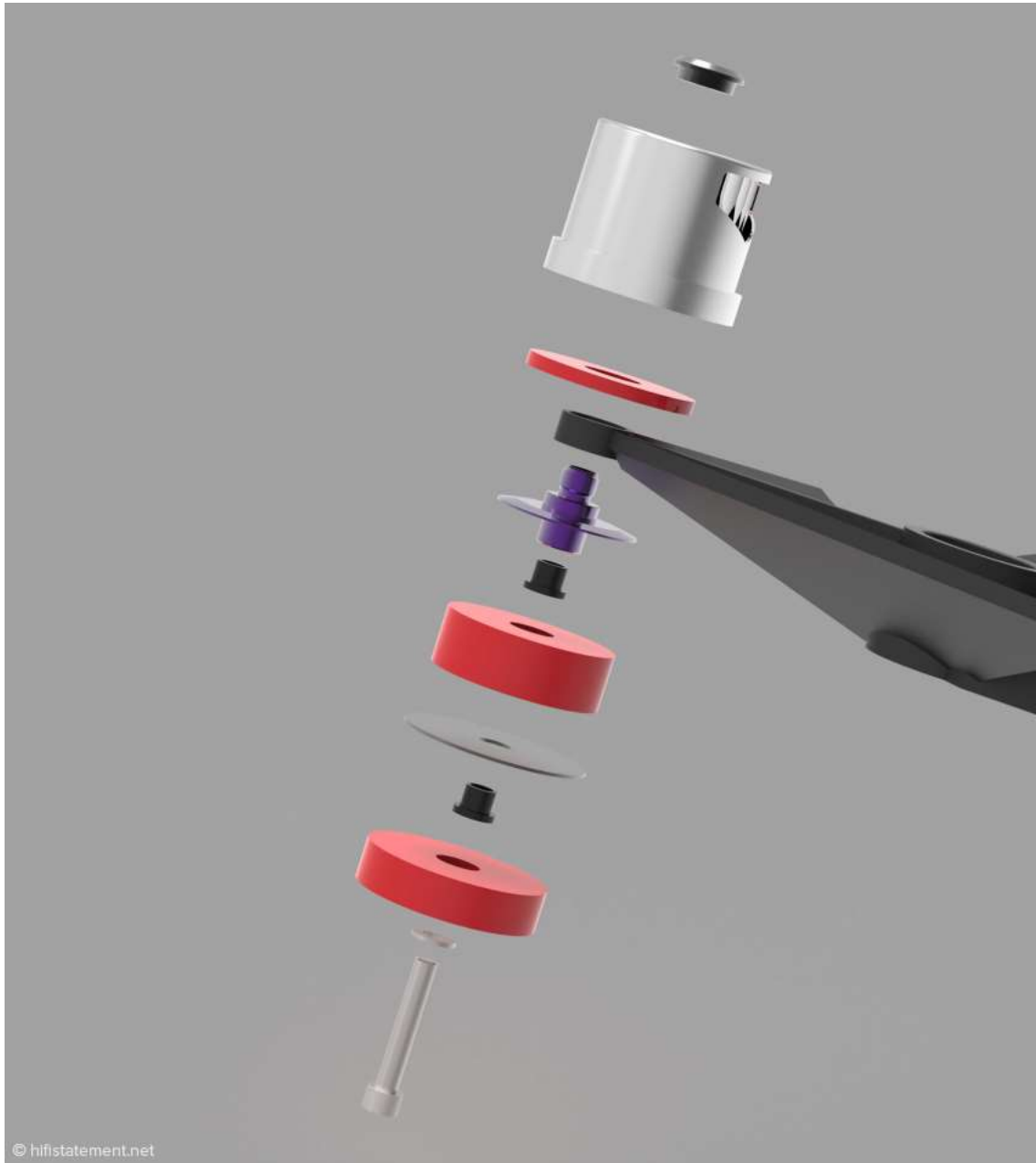
These pillars contain a sophisticated, impressively effective decoupling system

Even the unmistakable structural features of the construction of the turntable make the expectations of the musical abilities grow. The chassis is a rigid and low-resonance, sophisticated die-cast aluminium construction. The Diva II SP is absolutely identical to the more expensive Volvere and Sequel models. This construction suggests that a lot of development work was done at this point. Because this base is very different from other vinyl turntables. The aluminium frame is firmly connected to three solid columns that contain a sophisticated damping system. The die-cast chassis rests in the pillars between two layers of sorbothane, an elastic and at the same time dimensionally stable elastomeric plastic. This, co-developed by AVID, special rubber compound ensures excellent decoupling of the chassis boom. The deflections and the post-oscillation behaviour of a spiral spring system do not occur with this construction. In the lower part of the three pillars there is a third layer of sorbothane, which decouples the entire unit from the ground.



The schematic representation of one of the three pillars

In the later listening test, we will find that knocking on these three feet hardly gets through to the pickup during play. The construction made of absorbent plastic on the one hand and cast aluminium, which minimizes resonance due to the arrangement of its surfaces and its alloy, on the other hand means that there is no height adjustment, which would be desirable if the ground is not level. However, an adequate, level set-up, such as that using the AVID platform, which is available for 350 euros, is good form anyway.



The construction of a stand in an exploded drawing. Sorbotane is red

So there really isn't much to adjust on the AVID Diva II SP. However, one should carefully follow the steps below. There is the placement of the engine cylinder, which stands out due to its impressive weight. It also needs this in order to be able to reliably fulfill its task with the tractive force of the belt drive. A recess for the engine housing in the chassis of the Diva indicates its placement. He shouldn't touch the chassis to rule out resonance transmissions. A distance of 118 millimeters is the perfect distance between

the center of the platter axis and the axis of the motor pulley to ensure optimal belt tension. Yes, you read correctly. Two identical, fairly short round belts drive the inside of the platter and run in two separate grooves on the motor pulley.



The inverted precision bearing with the tungsten carbide ball

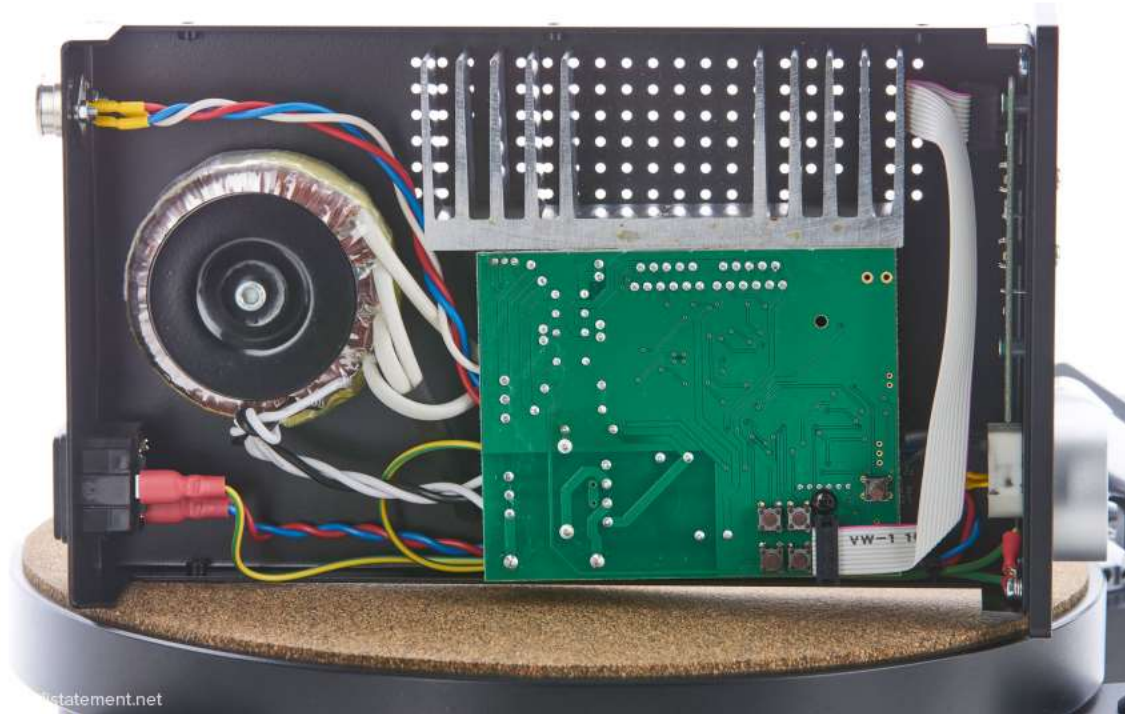
Putting the plate on is therefore a little different than usual and requires a little dexterity. I made it on the second try. But first to the plate and storage. The inverted bearing is placed on the stainless steel axle integrated in the chassis. A small ball made of tungsten carbide, an extremely hard ceramic material, is inserted into the upper side of the axle, which is designed as a slight depression. The stainless steel sintered bronze counter bearing opposes the tungsten carbide ball with a sapphire surface. This gives the Diva II SP a bearing with minimal friction that does not require an additional oil bath. The factory lubrication of the liner has a long service life and should be checked every ten years. The spindle has a thread on which the massive, grippy clamp made of black aluminum is screwed. The platter of the Diva II SP has a conical mount in the middle. Unlike the cheaper Diva II, it is not made of MDF but of an aluminum alloy and weighs an impressive 6.3 kilograms despite its low height. The cork mat is firmly glued to it, which is

intended to ensure the low-resonance coupling of the vinyl to the plate. Thanks to the central screw connection, the record comes into firm contact with the cork surface over a large area. A small tool is used to place the plate on the inverted bearing. Because the motor is located under the plate and the two belts cannot be placed directly over its pulley by hand. A double-grooved slot for the straps is inserted into a small hole below the plate. The two are stretched over and over the running surface of the belt inside the plate. As the platter is placed on the bearing, the small auxiliary spindle is held with one finger, then gently released and the belts slip onto the motor pulley. The auxiliary spindle then falls down and has done its job.



The two belts must be pretensioned before the plate is put on. You should let the drive spin in for a few hours. Only for this the power supply has to be connected first. It is located in an external housing that is connected to the motor housing via a low-voltage cable. The front of the black box is visually dominated by the large, matt silver power switch. To his right are the two buttons called Play and Speed. The drive must be stopped to switch the speed between 33 rpm and 45 rpm. That makes sense anyway because of the change of the record. To fine-tune the speed, both buttons are pressed simultaneously until the speed LED flashes. The speed can then be set using both buttons. Pressing both buttons at the same time saves the selected tempo. A look inside the supply unit shows a lavish toroidal transformer. A

digital processor generates a continuous, smooth current flow to the motor. The controller should even easily compensate for voltage fluctuations in the power grid.



The toroidal transformer is the eye-catcher once you have removed the cover of the supply unit

Our test unit is equipped with an SME-IV tonearm and a Nagaoka MP-150 moving magnet cartridge. The Diva II SP is offered by German distributors not only with all known 9" SME arms but also with the 9" Pro-Ject CC carbon. In addition, there is a large selection of tonearm boards, so that there are hardly any limits to the choice of arm as long as you are in the nine inch range. On request, the installation of longer arms can be made possible. The Nagaoka system, to be clear, was only allowed to take part in the listening test for a little while. While it may be okay for the price, it doesn't match the level of performance of the drive and the SME IV. It was replaced by the Clearaudio Da Vinci in the listening test. When I asked the sales department why they installed what I consider to be an inferior system, I got quite an interesting answer. It is well known that the drive-arm combination with the MP-150 is underequipped. However, the test device came to us directly from a hi-fi exhibition in Vienna. On such occasions, people like to compare several AVID drives. They are all equipped with the silver SME IV and this Nagaoka system. Even with this modest array of scanners, the properties of the various

AVID models can be clearly differentiated. Interesting – maybe there will be a demonstration at a dealer near you, dear reader. One of the two available acrylic covers was not included in the scope of delivery of our Diva II SP. The small version is already available for 110 euros. that the deck-arm combination was under-equipped with the MP-150. However, the test device came to us directly from a hi-fi exhibition in Vienna. On such occasions, people like to compare several AVID drives. They are all equipped with the silver SME IV and this Nagaoka system. Even with this modest array of scanners, the properties of the various AVID models can be clearly differentiated. Interesting – maybe there will be a demonstration at a dealer near you, dear reader. One of the two available acrylic covers was not included in the scope of delivery of our Diva II SP. The small version is already available for 110 euros. that the deck-arm combination was under-equipped with the MP-150. However, the test device came to us directly from a hi-fi exhibition in Vienna. On such occasions, people like to compare several AVID drives. They are all equipped with the silver SME IV and this Nagaoka system. Even with this modest array of scanners, the properties of the various AVID models can be clearly differentiated. Interesting – maybe there will be a demonstration at a dealer near you, dear reader. One of the two available acrylic covers was not included in the scope of delivery of our Diva II SP. The small version is already available for 110 euros. On such occasions, people like to compare several AVID drives. They are all equipped with the silver SME IV and this Nagaoka system. Even with this modest array of scanners, the properties of the various AVID models can be clearly differentiated. Interesting – maybe there will be a demonstration at a dealer near you, dear reader. One of the two available acrylic covers was not included in the scope of delivery of our Diva II SP. The small version is already available for 110 euros. On such occasions, people like to compare several AVID drives. They are all equipped with the silver SME IV and this Nagaoka system. Even with this modest array of scanners, the properties of the various AVID models can be clearly differentiated. Interesting – maybe there will be a demonstration at a dealer near you, dear reader. One of the two available acrylic covers was not included in the scope of delivery of our Diva II SP. The small version is already available for 110 euros. dear reader, such a demonstration will take place. One of the two available acrylic covers was not included in the scope of delivery of our Diva II SP. The small version is already available for 110 euros. dear reader, such a demonstration will take

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The SME tonearm is one of many options. The solid base is available with various tonearm preparations

If you have read the test reports about AVID drives that have appeared in international trade journals over the years, you will remember that there was always an impressive rhythm to read. This is exactly the impression I got right away. I consider this aspect to be extremely important, since it also affects the joy of playing and the dynamic behaviour. So the two singers Ingram Washington on Sweet 'N' Low and Gregory Porter on Be Good could be heard with a captivating presence and conciseness that is rare. Also Kari Bremne's bewitching performance on Over En Byhad unimagined verve - it was impossible to ignore it. It's not that easy to recognize the characteristics of the turntable from the set-up of the turntable, tonearm and cartridge. But it quickly becomes clear that the Diva II SP delivers a really very coherent overall result. There may be more expensive turntables that show a little more spatial depth in front of an even blacker background. After all, with this copy we are only in the middle of the AVID portfolio. I find the selflessness with which the AVID stages the music all the more gratifying. As with hardly any other

turntable, I had the feeling that it wasn't there. That's easy to explain: He just makes music. The Diva II SP is highly neutral, doesn't bring undue calm to the music, and on the other hand doesn't push you unjustifiably. The tonal neutrality enables him to unfold the characteristics of the tonearm and pickup and to explore their strengths and weaknesses. I was pleasantly surprised by Mahalia Jackson's performance on this AVID configuration Newport 158 , Columbia CS 8071: The vocals and band were very dynamic and powerful in the room. Some players have already become bogged down by this critical reception.



The solid screw clamp ensures the correct contact pressure of the vinyl on the cork mat. With its outer ring, it stretches the record over the slightly raised center of the turntable

The Diva II SP set can prepare pop and rock excellently, namely gripping in terms of both fine and coarse dynamics. That 's how Heartbeat City stayed of the cars from 1984 always transparent and at the same time rich in timbre. I heard details on Lou Reed's Transformer that I no longer remembered. I found jazz pieces like "Witchi-Tai-To" by Jan Garbarek and colleagues to be very well balanced. Palle Danielsson's bass creaked dryly and plastically, never got fat and gave fellow players Bobo Stenson and Jon Christensen enough acoustic space to develop. I can really rave about the Diva II SP for its acoustically non-intrusive nature. I can also imagine that equipping it with a

slightly less high-quality tonearm than the SME IV will still be musically very coherent and make the entry-level price more attractive. When it comes to the pickup, I would always push the limits of what is subjectively possible with this turntable, because the Diva II SP makes its qualities very clear. Finally, it should be mentioned that the handling of the clever record attachment is child's play and that even slightly wavy vinyl calms things down a bit - as happened with my DAVID Bowie The Man Who Sold The World from 1972, which also sounded amazing.



A simple overall appearance and great workmanship are the drive and control unit

STATEMENT

If you choose the AVID Diva II SP, you have made an excellent choice. It would be difficult to find a record player with comparable coherence in terms of rhythm, joy of playing, calmness, stability and dynamics at this price.

BELONGS WITH

pickup Audio Technica AT33PTG/II, Clearaudio Da Vinci

phono stage	Plinius Koru or Primare R-20
preamp	Audio gd master 9
power amplifier	for bass: two Primare A-32 for mid-high: Spectral DMA-100 or Air Tight ATM-3
speaker	Triangle Magellan Grand Concert Audioquest Diamond or Carbon USB, Inakustik Black&White NF-1302, QED Genesis Silver Spiral with Enacom LS, MudrAkustik Max power strip, Mudra and Audioquest NRG-X2 power cord, AHP pure copper fuses,
Accessories	Groneberg wall sockets, mbakustik room absorbers Creaktiv audio with absorber floors, finite element pagoda,
furniture	audio exclusive dcd base

MANUFACTURER INFORMATION

AVID Diva II SP

drive	double straps
speed	33.3 and 45.0 RPM (adjustable)
plate mass	6.3kg
warehouse	stainless steel, inverted
bearing mandrel	Tungsten carbide / sapphire
Construction	3-point elastomer bearing
tonearm base	Standard milled for SME (adapter to order)
engine	Synchronized to 24 volt AC

power supply	DSP Vari-Speed control unit
input voltage	100-240V AC 50/60Hz 20 watts max.
Dimensions	Drive (overall) 450 W x 390 D x 140 H mm Drive (footprint) 380 W x 340 D mm Power supply 158 W x 283 D x 60 H mm
net weight	Drive 12.8 kg PSU 2.2 kg
shipping weight	19.0kg
warranty	5 years
Price without tonearm	4000 euros

TONEARM - SME IV

Price	3400 euros
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CARTRIDGE - NAGAOKA MP-150(GREEN)

output voltage	4.5mV
frequency response	20-20,000Hz
channel separation	24dB
channel balance	> 1.5dB
impedance	47k ohms
needle carrier	Aluminum, hardened
needle cut	elliptical

tracking
force 1.5-2.0g

weight 6.5g

Price 369 euros

DISTRIBUTION

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